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Wednesday, 11 April 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Meza-Cuadra	(Peru)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco

Agenda

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2018/273)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10am.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2018/273)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Mali to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I warmly welcome His Excellency Mr. Tiéman Hubert Coulibaly, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/273, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Annadif and by Ambassador Olof Skoog, Permanent Representative of Sweden, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017) concerning Mali.

I now give the floor to Mr. Annadif.

Mr. Annadif (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to introduce the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2018/273), covering the first quarter of 2018.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the presence of Mr. Tiéman Hubert Coulibaly, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali.

As noted in the report, the first three months of 2018 were marked by the appointment on 30 December 2017 of a new Prime Minister, Mr. Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga. This period was also characterized by the strengthening of trust between the signatory parties of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, of which the Prime Minister's high-profile visit to the northern regions is a perfect illustration in that it concretized the gradual return of the authority of the State to those regions, particularly in Kidal.

Likewise, a degree of progress in the peace process deserves to be welcomed. This includes, among other things, the adoption by the Government on February 28 of laws establishing territorial communities in the regions of Ménaka and Taoudenni, and the signing on 22 March of a road map to operationalize the timeline of priority actions that was endorsed by the Agreement Monitoring Committee at its twenty-fourth session, held on January 15 and 16 in Bamako. I am convinced that the concretization of these various actions recorded in the road map, in particular the full operationalization of the Operational Coordination Mechanism in Kidal and Timbuktu, as well as ensuring the effective functioning of the interim authorities by endowing them with material and financial means confidence-building measures that could further support the Malian people in the implementation of the Agreement.

Workshops on the preregistration of combatants eligible for integration or the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, held successively in Kidal, Timbuktu, Ménaka and Gao during the last week of February, constitute real progress, including the convening of the high-level workshop on security sector reform, which allowed for a shared vision as an important lever for the security component of the Agreement.

In parallel with these initiatives, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and its partners continue to strengthen the capacities of regional authorities in the north and the centre of the country at the logistical, technical and political levels, as the interim authorities represent an important link in meeting the needs of the population, in particular in terms of basic social services, the return of refugees and displaced persons, and support for the electoral process, pending their replacement by elected authorities.

This positive dynamic in the implementation of the Agreement should not, however, make us forget that this is an election year in which the presidential elections are scheduled for 29 July for the first round

and 12 August for the second, while the legislative elections are scheduled for November and December. In that perspective, and in accordance with its mandate of good offices and support for the electoral process, MINUSMA undertook inclusive contacts with the entire Malian political class and the signatory movements in order to call on them to engage in a consensual process, leading to peaceful and credible elections.

In that regard, on 1 and 2 March MINUSMA facilitated the holding of a workshop on the revision of the electoral law of 17 October 2016 with several innovations, taking into account most of the demands of the opposition and civil society and many of the recommendations from the 2013 election observation missions of the European Union, the African Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the Economic Community of West African States. These include the introduction of a biometric electoral voting card, replacing the national identity card, and the assignment by the State of one monitor of the opposition and one of the majority to every polling station. At the same workshop, the Government agreed to conduct an independent audit of the electoral register, which should take place in April.

MINUSMA continues to undertake a further series of activities aimed at preventing post-election tensions and at supporting the revision of electoral lists so as to ensure that the entire process, as I have said, will be as consensual, inclusive and credible as possible.

The period covered by the report saw a deterioration of the security situation, particularly in the centre of the country, with sometimes quite serious human rights abuses, as pointed out by MINUSMA in its communiqué of 30 March. The same concerns were noted recently in the report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Mali, Mr. Suliman Baldo, during his visit from 12 to 16 March, and unfortunately remind us of the extent of the challenges in this domain.

The establishment of the International Commission of Inquiry on Mali and the Government's endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration on 1 February are commendable positive steps. We also welcome the Government's adoption, on 7 March, of a new national policy on Mali's borders.

A draft law of national understanding is being considered. It will probably be submitted to the National Assembly at its April session. Despite reservations on this particular issue, it should be noted that it would be a significant step towards national reconciliation. The transfer of Mr. Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud to the International Criminal Court on 31 March also proves that reconciliation does not necessarily mean impunity.

In order to support the Government plan intended to make the centre of the country more secure, MINUSMA and the United Nations country team have launched several initiatives to promote social cohesion and the restoration of State authority, economic recovery and the provision of basic social services, including quick-impact projects. It is important to note that a purely security-oriented approach is not and will not be sufficient and could even have the opposite effect.

In that connection, MINUSMA continues to provide constant support to the Specialized Judicial Unit against Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime. That collaboration has led, for the first time, to those accused as a result of investigations of the Unit being brought before the Court of Appeal in Bamako. The same cooperation has allowed the national policy and action plan on preventing and combating violent extremism and terrorism for 2018-2020 to be adopted.

In accordance with resolutions 2295 (2016) and 2364 (2017) and drawing on lessons from the recommendations of the Santos Cruz report, MINUSMA is undertaking an increasing number of major patrols, particularly in the centre of the region, to reassure the population, assess the human rights situation and interact with community leaders in some remote and hard-to-reach areas. That was the case for Operation Furaji from 15 to 27 January and Operation Foronto from 4 to 15 March.

Nonetheless, these achievements by MINUSMA have been tarnished by the number of victims, which has steadily increased in recent months, mainly as a result of landmines and improvised explosive devices, but also because of indirect targeting of shells and rockets, as was the case last week at the Aguelhok camp, which claimed the lives of two peacekeepers from Chad. We place great hope in the arrival of the recently deployed combat convoy companies, although they are not yet fully operational.

We recall the importance of giving priority to training and equipment for troops, including armoured vehicles. We currently lack approximately 100 armoured vehicles, which leaves us vulnerable. Troop- and police-contributing countries, whose efforts we

commend, are asked to do what they can to fill those gaps. We must also not forget the important shortfall in both combat and utility helicopters. There too, we place a great deal of hope in Canada's pledge to deploy six helicopters in the coming months, but that offer, as welcome as it is, still falls short of the number of helicopters we need.

During the period under review, we also had the pleasure of hosting, from 14 to 25 March, the independent MINUSMA strategic review team led by Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who engaged in several very constructive exchanges about the challenges being faced by the Mission.

We await with great interest the recommendations to be submitted shortly to the Secretary-General. We dare to hope that the recommendations will guide the Council's deliberations in the framework of the discussions on the renewal of MINUSMA's mandate and enable a better alignment between the mandate entrusted by the Security Council with the realities and constraints on the ground, as well as with the expectations of the people of Mali. These recommendations will also guide the ongoing considerations in drafting MINUSMA's strategic plan, as requested by resolution 2364 (2017).

In the meantime however, the Mission continues to work in close cooperation with the country team, in particular to respond to the needs of the Malian people, especially women and young people, through the tools available to us and their practical priorities. The task force on elections, the working group to support the interim authorities, as well as the coordination of activities in the Mopti region level are examples of this close cooperation. We also welcome the start of the work of the Panel of Experts of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017) concerning Mali on the sanctions regime. The Panel, which is another important tool in supporting the peace process, has already carried out two missions in Mali.

The Office of the Independent Observer is now almost operational. We also hope that its first report will help to attribute responsibilities and thereby accelerate the peace process.

The effective establishment of the International Commission of Inquiry on Mali is also eagerly awaited by the Malian people, in addition to the outstanding work that the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission continues to carry out. Those mechanisms complement the Agreement's monitoring architecture and provide new tools, in particular through the sanctions regime, which can strengthen the accountability and adherence of parties to the Agreement, while reminding them of their obligations.

In a context as complex as that of Mali, cooperation with other partners, first and foremost the Government of Mali, remains a priority for the United Nations. While continuing to support the Malian armed forces in accordance with the memorandum of understanding signed in November 2017, MINUSMA is working closely with the National Council for Security Sector Reform on the concept of establishing reconstituted security and defence forces, which is one of prerequisites for sustainable security in Mali. The high-level workshop that was held in Bamako from 27 to 28 March is a perfect example of this. The workshop not only brought together all the key actors of the Agreement, but also allowed frank and open exchanges among Malians in order to arrive a shared vision on the future of their defence and security forces.

Furthermore, in accordance with resolution 2391 (2017) and thanks to the signing of the technical arrangement on 23 February in Brussels among the United Nations, the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and the European Union, MINUSMA has already sketched out the framework of its support to the joint G-5 Sahel Joint Force. With the deployment of a team to the headquarters of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force in Sévaré, the mechanisms for medical evacuations, engineering and logistical support are already operational. Of course, all this has been done while ensuring compliance with the human rights due diligence policy.

In the context of regional cooperation, we welcome the important work being undertaken by the Peacebuilding Fund through the disbursement initiative of $3 million to promote the security of local populations and social cohesion in Liptako-Gourma, which is a region straddling the borders of Mali, Burkina Faso and the Niger, where a large number of terrorist elements are operating.

As the report before members underscores, 2018 is an election year. However, Malian actors should not lose sight of the fact that the implementation of the Agreement must remain a priority; it must not become a political football. We must endeavour to bring to completion both undertakings in a complementary

manner by relying on the fresh momentum provided by the new Prime Minister, which is necessary but not sufficient given the delays that have been noted. The international community must provide support and encouragement in this respect.

The Peace Agreement process is a complex one, and the Council must therefore call on the signatory parties to ensure that the road map signed on 22 March does not become a dead letter. It is time to move from pledges to action by respecting the deadlines that have been set.

Regarding the electoral process, all Malian political actors are unanimous in their belief that the elections need to be held on the dates set, with full transparency and credibility. The international community shares these same concerns. Just as the 2013 elections re-established constitutional order in Mali, those of 2018 must irreversibly anchor democracy in the country.

In terms of preparations, an agreement has been reached to review the current electoral law, which has led to a consensus-based draft that is currently before the National Assembly. An order for 8 million ballot cards is currently also being prepared. In line with its mandate, MINUSMA has begun to lend technical and logistical support where it is deployed and within resource constraints, including by transporting election materials and dispatching staff.

We have also begun to work to ensure secure elections and that any electoral disputes are properly handled. However, given the tight electoral schedule, concerns remain, including ensuring that the 8 million ballot cards are available and distributed in a timely manner, and that the voter list audit is carried out within the set deadline, thereby strengthening confidence.

The Council must call on all Malian politicians to respect the timeline and encourage them to approach the elections in a spirit of consensus, peace and credibility. Failing to do so would exacerbate the crisis, with the enemies of peace emerging as the winners. They are undeserving of such a gift.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Annadif for his very informative briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Skoog.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I have the honour to report to the Security Council on the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017) concerning Mali. The report covers the period from 5 September 2017 to 4 April 2018, during which time the Committee met twice in informal consultations and conducted additional work via the written silence procedure.

After the establishment of the Committee, preparatory work was undertaken by the Secretariat in terms of creating the Committee's website in all languages; preparing the budget of the Panel of Experts; screening candidates for the Panel; and preparing the Committee's guidelines.

On 29 January, the Committee adopted the guidelines for the conduct of its work, and on 1 February, the Panel of Experts started its work.

On 5 February, the Committee convened its first informal consultations, during which the four members of the Panel of Experts were introduced to the Committee and presented their work plan.

During the informal consultations held on 28 February, the Committee considered the first interim update of its Panel of Experts, submitted to the Committee in accordance with paragraph 11 of resolution 2374 (2017). The Committee heard a presentation by the Coordinator of the Panel, followed by an interactive discussion between the Committee members and the Coordinator.

Together with other members of the Committee, I conducted a visit to Bamako on 26 and 27 March. I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his team, as well as the Security Council Affairs Division, for having facilitated that mission. The visit provided us with an opportunity to obtain first-hand information from key counterparts in Mali and engage with all Malian parties on how the sanctions regime put in place by the resolution can support peace and stability, including through the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. In accordance with the Committee guidelines, I will report, orally and in writing, to the Committee on the observations and the findings of the trip.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all Member States for their continued willingness to cooperate constructively with the Committee and its Panel of Experts.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ambassador Skoog for his very informative briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Annadif, for his most informative briefing and his exemplary commitment. On behalf of France, I wish to reiterate our full support to him and all his team. I wish also to thank the Permanent Representative of Sweden, Olof Skoog, for his briefing and for his work at the helm of the sanctions Committee. I wish also to warmly welcome the presence here of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, Mr. Tiéman Hubert Coulibaly, and to thank him for having travelled to New York to take part in our work.

I wish to begin my statement by hailing the memory of the three Blue Helmets who perished last week during attacks against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). France pays tribute to the memory of these warriors for peace. Their sacrifice serves as a reminder of how MINUSMA is evolving in a difficult environment and of the key role it plays in promoting the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, and in protecting the Malian people from those who oppose it and in so doing resort to actions that include terrorist attacks and criminal acts. France, engaged alongside the United Nations peacekeeping Mission, is aware of this threat and itself has suffered therefrom, as two French soldiers perished on 21 February last.

Today's meeting is of particular importance with respect to follow-up to the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation. The members of the Security Council made a collective commitment, in their statement to the press of 24 January last, to seize the opportunity to take stock of the implementation by the parties of the commitments made in the framework of the priority actions timeline adopted in January. At that point, a decision was also taken that additional measures would be considered under the sanctions regime if the commitments taken were not met by the set deadlines.

We welcome the efforts made by the Government, since the most recent meeting of the Council on Mali (see S/PV.8163), to foster the necessary consensus on the electoral process and restore the Administration's presence in central Mali. The Prime Minister's visit to Kidal in particular marked a restoration of high-level political leadership and cooperation as concerns the implementation of the Peace Agreement, nearly four years after the last visit by a comparable level of authority to the region.

Unfortunately, it is clear that in the wake of the deadline set by the Malian parties themselves under the timetable of priority actions, a large part of the commitments made have not yet been implemented. The resulting delays are far from being inconsequential on the ground for a number of reasons. Given the lack of progress, all of the achievements to date and the very relevance of the Agreement itself could end up being called into question; the significant electoral deadlines scheduled for the coming months make it all the more necessary and urgent to move forward on various aspects of the Agreement, which is imperative to ensure the success of the elections to come; and there can be no lasting stability in the Sahel absent the full implementation of the Peace Agreement.

In terms of substance, it is still the same measures whose implementation by the Malian parties we are awaiting. It is particularly urgent that progress be achieved, specifically in the areas of decentralization and security. Specifically, I am thinking in terms of the operationalization of interim authorities, the establishment of territorial police and progress in the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and that of security sector reform. France also encourages Malian authorities to pursue work dedicated to combating impunity. It calls on all parties to halt human rights violations.

We were pleased to note the adoption a few days ago of a new road map, at the Prime Minister of Mali's initiative, announcing the implementation of measures awaited for by Malian parties according to the revised schedule. We can only support that initiative and hope for its success, which includes the upcoming holding of regular meetings of the Agreement Monitoring Committee in Bamako. But let us be clear: the new road map, which is unfortunately not the first, cannot let us forget the fact that the commitments undertaken this past January failed once again to be respected, while the Malian people, the countries of the region and the entire international community has been waiting for their implementation for almost three years.

In that regard, the responsibility of the Council — pursuant to the very terms of the peace agreement — involves taking steps necessary to encourage the parties to honour the commitments

that they made within that framework. The adoption of resolution 2374 (2017), in September 2017, which established a sanctions regime concerning Mali, was a first step in that direction. Today, subsequent delays in the implementation of the agreement and the failure to realize commitments according to agreed deadlines are driving us to take additional measures. We no longer have the time to wait. In the coming weeks, together with its Council partners, France will undertake the task of identifying those obstructing the implementation of the peace agreement, through which their names will be determined. We intend to focus initially on a list of officials who are undermining the implementation of the agreement on the ground, in particular through their collusion with terrorist groups and trafficking activities. All Malian stakeholders must be aware that the Security Council takes their word as their bond with regard to upholding their commitments.

Despite the challenges it faces, MINUSMA remains today an essential instrument for ensuring the stability of Mali, in addition to the other security forces present on the ground. Its role in supporting the electoral process will be decisive in the holding of presidential elections in July and August. Fully aware of the difficult environment in which the Mission is deployed, France reiterates its call on all Member States to ensure that the Mission is provided with the capabilities and equipment commensurate with the mandate that the Council has conferred upon it. In our view, that is an absolutely crucial point, especially in terms of strengthening the safety of peacekeepers on the ground, which is the priority of all of us. For example, the installation of early-warning devices in all of the Mission's camps in the case of an indirect attack would undoubtedly allow us to save lives, as was tragically illustrated by the recent attacks on the Kidal and Aguelhok camps, which were only a few days apart. That is one of the areas in which we must act urgently together with the Secretariat so long as there are existing technical solutions that are moreover available to us in the short-term.

We believe that the strategic review currently being conducted by Ellen Margrethe Løj also affords us a valuable opportunity to improve the performance and outcomes of the Mission. We fully support that process, which will be advantageous for all of us. We will consider with interest the recommendations to be made by the Secretary-General on the work under way, in view of the upcoming renewal of the Mission's mandate. We especially hope that they will enable us to continue to move forward towards a better sequencing of the mandate's tasks so that MINUSMA can contribute as effectively as possible to the stabilization of Mali, including in the northern part of the country, while supporting the Malian armed forces in conjunction with the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), Operation Barkhane and the engagement of the European Union. We will also take that opportunity to work towards achieving increased clarity with regard to the role and responsibilities of each element of the security architecture deployed in Mali and the region.

Lastly, France welcomes the signing of the technical arrangement between the United Nations, the European Union and the G-5 Sahel set out in resolution 2391 (2017) in record time. The next report of the Secretary-General on the G-5 Sahel Joint Force will provide a new foundation for responding to legitimate demands for support by the G-5 Sahel countries in terms of security and development. We will do that by considering the pace of the Joint Force's operationalization on the ground and by maintaining consensus on this issue within the Council.

Today it is imperative to move forward quickly towards the full implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. It is that message of urgency and shouldering responsibility that we want to convey to all Malian parties today. We hope that it will bring about the awaited leap forward by those who hold the key to move Mali and the region towards lasting peace and stability. France will continue to stand with all those who want to advance in that direction.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): We begin our statement by condemning in the strongest terms the recent attacks perpetrated, first, on 5 April against a camp of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in Aguelhok, in north-east Mali, which claimed the life of two Chadian Blue Helmets, and in which 10 were wounded, and, secondly, the 6 April attack on Gao, which resulted in the death of a Nigerian peacekeeping staff member. The Republic of Equatorial Guinea expresses its sincerest condolences to the families of the fallen soldiers, to the Governments of Chad and the Niger and MINUSMA, and wishes the wounded a speedy recovery.

We welcome the presence of Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the

Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, and His Excellency Mr. Tiéman Hubert Coulibaly, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali, for the detailed briefing that he will deliver as he always does. We are also grateful to Ambassador Olof Skoog, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017), concerning Mali, for his succinct briefing.

Equatorial Guinea accords great importance to issues concerning Africa and the situation in Mali, a brotherly country to which we attach great interest. Equatorial Guinea is fully committed to achieving the stability and peace of the country. We express our full support for the Government's efforts to achieve peace, and, in that regard, we welcome its efforts to implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We call on all stakeholders to join those efforts. The international community must also monitor the process.

Mali continues to face major challenges. Terrorist activity remains latent and a real threat to the work that has been undertaken, as it will be nearly impossible to stabilize the political and security situation if terrorist groups are not eradicated. There is therefore a need to strengthen the Malian Government in its efforts in that struggle. It is important that the Government consolidate its presence in all regions of the country. In that process, it will require technical support that must be provided with the full acquiescence of the Government.

Terrorist activity in Mali extends beyond its borders and represents a serious threat to the entire region, for which reason it is important that cooperation in that struggle remain sensitive to that aspect, thereby placing emphasis on the importance of regional cooperation, including regional and subregional institutions, such as the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union. The decision of the Heads of State of the Group of Five for the Sahel to create joint counter-terrorism forces for regional security is a welcome step in this direction.

A few months before the presidential elections scheduled for July 2018, it is important that significant progress be made on the ground in the short term. The Republic of Equatorial Guinea therefore encourages the Government of Mali and all the signatory movements to the Bamako Agreement to redouble their efforts to ensure the diligent implementation of all the provisions of the Agreement, in particular by means of the timeline of priority measures adopted at the twenty-third session of the Agreement Monitoring Committee and to find a consensus in the framework of the organization of the forthcoming presidential elections. This Agreement, which is a result of the Algiers process, remains the only inclusive and consensual framework capable of restoring peace and stability in Mali.

The Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea fully subscribes to the communiqué of 23 March 2018 of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, welcoming with full satisfaction the operationalization of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, which we thank for its determination and sacrifices devoted to the promotion of peace, security and stability in the Sahel. We reaffirm the importance of the Nouakchott process in promoting peace and security in Mali and the Sahelo-Sahara region and of intensifying its efforts to bring together stabilization and development efforts in the Sahel.

Referring to the report of the Secretary-General of 29 March 2018 (S/2018/273), it is necessary to strengthen support for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, and in particular the capacity of the Malian defence and security forces in terms of training and equipment, so that they are in a better position to deal with the asymmetric attacks they are suffering and with a view to having better management at the national level, in support of regional and international efforts to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and transnational organized crime.

Finally, we call on the international community to join efforts to support the Government of Mali in the framework of the humanitarian response plan 2018, launched in Bamako, which aims to provide, inter alia, basic assistance and protection in sectors such as food security, nutrition, water and sanitation.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mahamat Saleh Annadif and the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017) concerning Mali, Ambassador Olof Skoog, for their comprehensive briefings on the activities of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) over the past three months and the implementation of the Mali sanctions regime.

We are pleased to see the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali, His Excellency Mr. Tiéman Hubert Coulibaly, who is with us in the Security Council this morning.

We wish to pay tribute to the memory of the fallen peacekeepers serving under MINUSMA. Their greatest reward would be the restoration of full security and peace in Mali. It is in that spirit that we strongly condemn the series of terrorist attacks in Mali that claimed the lives of innocent civilians and MINUSMA peacekeepers. We express our sympathy and solidarity with Mali, and we support all the statements issued by the Council in this regard.

We appreciate the efforts of MINUSMA forces in carrying out their mandated tasks under extremely difficult circumstances. MINUSMA's ongoing support to Mali remains absolutely essential. It is indispensable, as Ambassador Delattre said. That is also the case with the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, to which we attach great importance. We welcome the various efforts that have contributed to its full operationalization. We acknowledge the contributions of Operation Barkhane and of the European Union.

In the political area, we note with satisfaction the appointment of a new Prime Minister and his activities in working with the various stakeholders, including fostering an environment conducive to holding peaceful, credible and transparent elections throughout the country. We very much welcome the preparations made for the conduct of regional, district and municipal elections scheduled to be held this month and call upon all Malian parties to work towards the smooth conduct of these elections, exercise maximum restraint and resolve differences through dialogue. The announcement made by the Prime Minister regarding the measures to restore State authority and deliver peace dividends to the people is also commendable.

It is encouraging that a timeline on the implementation of the key provisions of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali was developed by the Agreement Monitoring Committee, and we urge that efforts be made for the speedy implementation of the timeline and the strict implementation of the peace Agreement. Those who are found to be creating obstructions should be held responsible in line with resolution 2374 (2017).

Despite the progressive registered, the continued deterioration of the security situation in Mali largely due to the terrorist attacks in the north and the centre of the country remains a source of serious concern. The destructive intentions of the terrorist groups to undermine State authority has resulted in a decrease in the number of State officials redeployed to the northern and central regions. The insecurity in northern and central Mali and the limited State presence has also worsened the humanitarian situation. Urgent action is therefore needed to quickly reverse this situation.

We recall when Mali was a leading democratic country in Africa and a beacon of hope for the continent. There is no reason why Mali could not reach that status again. It is with a view to assisting Mali regain the momentum to achieve that noble objective that the Council should do everything possible to have Mali's back. As Special Representative of the Secretary-General Annadif has stressed, our support should not be limited to the security area, as much that is no doubt extremely critical.

Mr. Zhang Dianbin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks you, Sir, for calling today's meeting. We warmly welcome Mr. Coulibaly, Foreign Minister of Mali, to the Security Council. We would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Annadif and Ambassador Skoog for their respective briefings.

Recently, there has been positive progress in terms of implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. The new Government of the country is firmly committed to the peace process. China expresses its appreciation for the efforts being carried out by the Malian Government and the Malian people. At the same time, however, the security situation in northern and central Mali remains grim. Terrorist activities are rampant inside the country and in neighbouring areas, which seriously affects the peace process. The international community should continue to support the peace and reconciliation process in Mali and help the country to enhance its ability to provide for its own security and development.

First, it is necessary to increase input in the peace process. China hopes that the signatories to the Malian peace agreement will continue to demonstrate political will, fully implement the various provisions of the Agreement and work together to achieve national development and reconstruction. The international community should, on the basis of respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of

the country, help Mali to increase its ability to provide for its own development and governance. The Chair of the Mali sanctions committee, Ambassador Skoog, recenlty led the Council's mission to the country and held talks with various parties concerned. China hopes that the sanctions committee will play a constructive role in facilitating the Malian peace process.

Secondly, the security situation in the country continues to deteriorate. The international community should, as requested by the Government, continue to support and help the Government to enhance its security and counter-terrorism capacity-building so that the latter can gradually assume the responsibility for maintaining order and security on its entire territory. It is necessary to take an integrated approach and, through regional cooperation, to respond to terrorist activities inside the country and along the borders. China welcomes the formation of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), which will enable them to cope and respond to terrorist activities and threats on their own initiative, and hopes that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the international community will continue to provide support to the countries of the region and the Joint Force.

Thirdly, China appreciates and supports the tremendous work carried out by MINUSMA and Special Representative Annadif to facilitate the peace process and to strengthen security capacity-building in Mali. We hope that MINUSMA will continue to work in close cooperation and coordination with the Malian Government so as to help the country to strengthen its security capacity-building and promote disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

China commends the timely briefing by the Secretariat on MINUSMA's support for the G-5 Sahel Joint Forces and looks forward to an update from the Secretary-General's May report in that connection.

The issue of the security of MINUSMA personnel is deeply concerning. Since the start of this year, there have been three attacks on peacekeepers, resulting in the deaths of peacekeepers from Bangladesh, Chad and the Niger. China offers its condolences to the bereaved the families and to the Governments of Bangladesh, Chad and the Niger. The international community should do more to enhance the safety and security of the peacekeepers, and we hope that MINUSMA will beef up its security measures so as to ensure that supplies and installations for security are in place. At the same time, we hope that it will continue to strengthen communications with troop-contributing countries and donors so as to ensure that it has the equipment and resources necessary to execute its mandate and ensure self-protection.

China has more than 400 peacekeepers deployed to MINUSMA. We will resolutely honour our commitment to peace in Mali and, with the rest of the international community, to support the peace and reconciliation process in the country so as to help it to achieve peace, stability and development.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, for his very inciteful briefing, as always, and the work he does with his team on the ground.

I also want to express our appreciation for the presence, once again, of Minister Coulibaly, which is much appreciated and useful.

While it is clear that some progress is being made in Mali, concerns remain over the security situation and the pace of implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. I should like to pay tribute to the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in difficult and often dangerous circumstances. Our thoughts remain with the families of the peacekeepers from Chad and the Niger who lost their lives in the attacks that occurred in Aguelhok and Gao last week. The Malian Government has the primary responsibility to fight impunity for violence and ensure access to justice for all, including by prioritizing the reconciliation and justice measures in the peace Agreement. In this regard, we welcome the new Government's ambitious plans to restore security, particularly in central Mali — always, of course, in full respect for human rights.

On 24 January, the Security Council adopted a press statement (SC/13177) that clearly set out our expectations in relation to the key reforms foreseen under the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We expressed a shared sense of impatience at persistent delays in the Agreement's implementation, as well as our intention to assess progress and respond with appropriate steps, if needed. The time to evaluate progress has now come; we are ready to engage with all parties and key actors to do so.

We welcome the continued engagement of the parties in the implementation process. The recent visit of Prime Minister Maïga to the northern and central regions is encouraging, as is the ongoing drafting process of a national strategy on security sector reform. However, engagement must be further translated into tangible actions. We regret that most of the deadlines set out in the January timetable have not been met. We stand ready to continue to work with the parties to implement the roadmap, as further revised in March. We hope that there will be no further delays or adjustments to the timetable going forward.

We reiterate the need for substantial steps towards the full implementation of the peace Agreement as a prerequisite for successful elections. At the same time, it is crucial for Mali and the peace process that elections be duly and legitimately undertaken and that electoral timetables be fully respected. As the date set for the planned elections gets closer, there is no time to spare. All parties have a responsibility to honour their commitments and engage in confidence-building measures without further delay.

We welcome and echo the Secretary-General's call for the inclusion of women and youth in all the mechanisms supporting the implementation of the Agreement, as well as among interim authorities. Inclusivity and the full and effective participation of women, including in elected and nominated functions and decision-making structures related to the peace process, is essential to building a sustainable peace. For that reason, the meeting on 16 January between the President of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, the High Representative of the President for the peace process and MINUSMA with a delegation of women representing signatory armed groups and civil society was encouraging. However, the further institutionalization of women's inclusion in the mechanisms supporting the implementation of the Agreement is needed.

All the tools needed to support the peace process are now in place, including the independent observer, the International Commission of Inquiry on Mali and resolution 2374 (2017). We encourage the parties to take advantage of this opportunity. I want to again thank Foreign Minister Coulibaly for his availability and active engagement during the visit to Mali of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017) concerning Mali. It was clear that the parties took the sanctions instrument seriously, with all parties to the peace agreement expressing their support and engaging. That engagement needs to be sustained

Finally, MINUSMA's presence remains a key factor for stability in Mali. Its support for the Malian Government serves to build confidence between State actors and the population. We look forward to the conclusions of the independent strategic review, which we hope will identify ways to enhance the performance of the Mission. We are proud to contribute to MINUSMA's important work as it continues to support the parties to deliver on their commitment to implementing the outstanding provisions of the peace Agreement.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I thank Foreign Minister Coulibaly for taking time to join us today. I should like to join colleagues in thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing and my Swedish colleague for his report and the expeditious work of his Committee.

Like other speakers, we condemn the recent attacks against the peacekeepers in Mali, and we offer our condolences to the families of the three peacekeepers of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) who were killed last week, to MINUSMA, and to the Governments and the people of Chad and the Niger. I would just like to say how much I agree with what the Ethiopian Ambassador said about the greatest reward being progress on the ground. I think we all want to help MINUSMA to that end.

The United Kingdom strongly supports the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. It is the primary basis for sustainable peace and stability in Mali, and we need progress also in order to deny space to extremists. As other speakers have noted, at the Security Council's last meeting on Mali in January (see S/PV.8163) and also in its subsequent press statement (SC/13177), we welcomed the renewed commitment of the Government and the signatory armed groups to actually implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation by the end of March, and that was agreed in the revised timetable of 16 January.

However, and disappointingly, it has been common theme of all interventions today that the persistent delays that tested the Council's patience in January are still continuing to frustrate us today, some time after the original deadline. There has been some positive progress, and I do not want to underplay that, but it is

also clear that this just has not been enough. The parties have agreed yet another new road map, rather than focusing on implementation of the existing timetable. There have been numerous revised deadlines and they have not been met. The delay to implementation will, unfortunately, have an impact on Mali's ability to conduct peaceful and inclusive presidential and parliamentary elections this year, and that, in turn, risks further destabilization to the security and humanitarian situation.

In January, the Council noted the tools available under the Mali sanctions regime and expressed its intention to respond with appropriate steps should the parties not implement the commitments they made. In view of the lack of progress, the United Kingdom now supports action to identify those obstructing, delaying or threatening the implementation of the Agreement, with a view to imposing sanctions on those actors.

As I have stated, it is down to the parties themselves to implement the Agreement; but, like others, I would like to note the key role played by MINUSMA in the implementation. We commend the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and all the staff, especially considering the challenging circumstances in which the military and civilian components are operating. As we look forward to renew MINUSMA's mandate in June, we must ensure that its mandate is clear, it focuses on supporting the implementation of the Agreement and it is adequately equipped to support peace in Mali.

With that in mind, I have another call on all Member States to ensure that the continued shortfall of troop numbers and equipment, including the need for further air cover, reconnaissance capability and armoured personnel carriers, is generously met. The United Kingdom is committed to tackling threats in the Sahel. Following the Anglo-French summit in January, we have contributed Chinook helicopters to support Operation Barkhane, and those are aligned and working closely with MINUSMA. That is all designed to promote stabilization in a bid to enable MINUSMA to carry out its core mandate.

Finally, let me say that we too are disturbed by reports of summary executions by the Forces Armées Maliennes, and we strongly encourage the Government to investigate those reports and ensure accountability for those responsible. I join the French Ambassador in stressing how important that is. Human rights reporting and monitoring should be prioritized in the MINUSMA mandate, and we hope that it will be able to address those and other important human rights violations by signatory armed groups.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): We join others in expressing appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Annadif and Ambassador Skoog for their comprehensive briefings. We also welcome to Chamber His Excellency Mr. Tiéman Hubert Coulibaly, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali. We thank him for being with us today. We fully endorse the Secretary-General's well-reflected quarterly report (S/2018/273) and make the following observations and recommendations for the Security Council's consideration.

It is clear that the accelerated implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali should be our main priority. Kazakhstan welcomes the efforts of the Malian Government, with the support of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the African Union and regional actors, to work with all sides towards advancing compliance with the Agreement. We hope that recent developments, including the visits by His Excellency Prime Minister Maïga to Mopti and Kidal and the visits to Mali by the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017), concerning Mali, and by the United Nations Panel of Experts, as well as the establishment of the International Commission of Inquiry for Mali, will give impetus to the peace process. We encourage all parties to comply with the agreed road map to operationalize the "chronogram" for the implementation of the remaining provisions of the Agreement.

To achieve lasting peace and stability in Mali, it is necessary to implement the key provisions of the Agreement related to decentralization, defence and security areas. That should be accompanied by efforts to bring about national reconciliation, as well as ensure basic services, resilience-building, economic development, good governance and the rule of law. In that regard, we support the Government's multidimensional strategy for the central regions and emphasis on the importance of creating potential for the security-development nexus, as well as a revamped and innovative regional approach to finalize the development agenda for the northern regions. On the other hand, genuinely including women and youth in the

peace process and decision-making is also important for enduring stability.

Another critical task is to ensure the transparent, fair, peaceful and inclusive holding of the 2018 presidential and legislative elections in one of the leading democracies in Africa, as stressed today by the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia. The assistance from the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and from the international community will therefore be most critical for a successful electoral process and final elections, beneficial to all. Addressing the deteriorating humanitarian situation is equally important. We therefore call on international partners and donors to fund the humanitarian response plan for 2018, and urge all parties to comply with international humanitarian law and human rights law.

Kazakhstan is deeply concerned by the significantly deteriorating, grave security situation in the north and centre of Mali. To address the capability gaps of MINUSMA, it is essential to provide better equipment and predeployment training for the contingents, with enhanced equipment, surveillance and more robust combat capabilities, which is needed as situations of asymmetrical conflict arise in Mali. We believe that the ongoing strategic review of MINUSMA will contribute to enhancing the Mission's capabilities and improving the security situation. In that vein, it is time to protect not only the Mission's personnel, but also Malians themselves. Most of the activities and the budget of MINUSMA, from now on, should be rearranged accordingly.

We are convinced that the operationalization of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) will substantially reinforce the efforts of MINUSMA and the national security forces of Mali to combat terrorism and other cross-border threats that require innovative approaches to completely eliminate the scourge. We commend international partners for mobilizing financial support for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force at the Brussels conference, which will make the Force fully operational. We also support the decision of the African Union Peace and Security Council made on 23 March on the situation in Mali.

Finally, we, like others, strongly condemn violent attacks perpetrated by terrorist groups against civilians, humanitarian workers, Malian security forces and MINUSMA. We would like to conclude by paying special tribute to the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice of their life for the cause of peace.

Ms. Tachco (United States of America): Like others, I want to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Annadif for his briefing, which is always excellent, and also Ambassador Skoog for leading the mission to Mali and for his briefing today. I would also like to join others in welcoming Foreign Minister Coulibaly back to New York. It is great to see him here committed to moving forward on the peace process in Mali and undertaking the security challenges there.

Like others as well, I take this opportunity to express our deepest condolences and sympathy to the families of the three peacekeepers of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) who made the ultimate sacrifice in the name of peace during last week's attacks, as well as to the Governments Chad and the Niger. We also wish those injured in the attacks a very speedy recovery.

Foreign Minister Coulibaly vowed to the Security Council in January (see S/PV.8163) that his Government was committed to making progress on the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. In addition, also in January, the signatories to the Agreement agreed to a revised timeline — or "chronogram", as it is referred to — which promised major gains in the Peace Agreement implementation by March. Now, in mid-April, there is still no substantive progress in the implementation of the Agreement. The United States has expressed concern many times in this Chamber, and the Council has made similar declarations in its statements and resolutions, that time is running out for the peace process in Mali. Yet we see little progress from the parties, despite our repeated sounding of the alarm.

In January the Security Council unanimously declared its intention, absent progress on the timeline, to respond with appropriate steps. Our tools include the sanctions regime we have authorized for political spoilers who engage in obstruction, including through the purposeful delay of the implementation of the Agreement. That also includes spoilers who obstruct through collusion with transnational organized criminals or those who plan or conduct attacks, regardless of affiliation. We look forward to working with our Council colleagues to identify, in a careful

and balanced way, individuals who fit that criteria and proceed accordingly.

There is truly no more time to waste, because Mali faces a desperate and worsening security crisis. We are alarmed about the deteriorating security situation in central Mali, in particular where violent extremists exploit absent State authority by increasing their control over disputed territory, restricting traditional practices, forcing the closure of schools and threatening civilians with violence if they cooperate with the Malian authorities. We should also recognize that violent extremists build their own community relations and administration in the absence of Government.

The dangers continue to grow, as the number of improvised-explosive-device attacks affecting civilians have increased dramatically. The recent doubling of lethal attacks against MINUSMA and Malian defence and security forces is also extremely troubling. However, the lack of State authority is not the only problem. When the State moves into territories, it must be seen as a positive thing for the local population. MINUSMA's support to deploy Malian armed forces in order to establish State presence in central Mali is crucial, but the operations must respect human rights, promote accountability and engage local communities. We are particularly concerned about the reports of possible extra-judicial killings in Diora last week, as well as other outstanding allegations of human rights abuses and violations by security forces. We look forward to the results of Government and MINUSMA investigations into such allegations, including appropriate steps to ensure accountability.

As others have done today, the United States commends the conclusion of the technical and financial agreements among the United Nations, the European Union and the Group of Five for the Sahel, and we applaud the ongoing operationalization of the Joint Force. With half a billion dollars in pledges at the February donors conference in Brussels, a technical agreement to provide the Force with logistical support and continuing regional efforts with partners to find holistic solutions to the region's problems, it is clear that Mali has dedicated partners that contribute their time, resources, political support and, in some instances, their lives to counter the violent extremist threat. It is all the more reason for Mali's signatory parties to the Peace Agreement to do their part.

We look forward to the results of the Secretary-General's strategic review of MINUSMA next month and urge the review team to make specific, clear and achievable recommendations for the Council's consideration, with the inclusion of specific recommendations for specific actors to undertake.

The situation in Mali is critical. The brave and courageous peacekeepers in MINUSMA and the Malian people deserve better than what the signatory parties to the Peace Agreement are delivering. MINUSMA cannot solve the current conflict in Mali. The Government of Mali and the signatory parties must chart the way to resolving Mali's underlying conflict so the country can turn its full attention to providing for its citizens and addressing the terrorist threat. We look forward to their immediate progress on the most recent road map.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like very much to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Mr. Annadif, and the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017), concerning Mali, His Excellency Ambassador Skoog. We appreciate their valuable briefings on the most recent developments in the Republic of Mali. We also commend the Special Representative on his efforts to ease political tensions among all the parties concerned and to implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We also welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali, Mr. Coulibaly, who is participating in today's meeting. In my statement today I will address three key issues, namely, the security, political and humanitarian situations.

First, with regard to the security situation, we are concerned about, and have paid close attention to, the increasing use of improvised explosive devices by terrorist groups over the past two years. The number of incidents in which such devices were used has exceeded 269 since the beginning of 2016. They have killed nearly 230 people and injured 480. We commend MINUSMA and other international partners, as well as the security forces in Mali, on their efforts to train and build the capacity of security personnel, provide the necessary military resources to the security sector and support Operational Coordination Mechanism. We must speed up the operationalization of the Mechanism to ensure that all combatants are integrated into the security sector, according to the number agreed upon,

in order to address security threats and ensure control over the northern areas.

The State of Kuwait extends its deep condolences to the families of the victims of the two terrorist attacks that took place in Aguelhok and Gao, as well as to the Governments of the Niger and Chad and to MINUSMA. We are deeply saddened about the ongoing deterioration of the security situation in Mali. We are concerned about the increasing number of civilian victims during the most recent reporting period and about continued attacks on security personnel, in particular the Blue Helmets, who risk their lives daily to ensure stability and security in Mali. We reiterate our support and gratitude to them and to all peacekeepers. Our gratitude will always fall short, regardless of how much we thank them.

With regard to the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, the State of Kuwait welcomes the pledges made during the donors conference held in Brussels on 23 February, which will enable the Force to carry out its tasks to the fullest. In that regard, we look forward to the report of the Secretary-General in May.

Secondly, concerning the political situation, we welcome the road map that was signed by all the relevant parties on 22 March. We urge them to commit themselves to the timeline agreed upon. We reiterate our position that the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali is the main solution to the ongoing crisis in Mali. We commend the group of mediators, led by Algeria, the United Nations and participating regional and international organizations on their efforts to reduce security and political tensions in Mali. We also call upon the Government of Mali to play its role and create an environment conducive to implementing the Agreement by taking key political steps, such as cooperating with all parties to ensure the completion of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, security sector reform and the decentralization process. We underscore that the absence of State authority in northern Mali will thwart comprehensive progress.

We welcome the visit by the Prime Minister Maïga to the city of Kidal, in northern Mali, to bridge the political gap and rebuild trust between the residents of that area and the central Government and to resume social services in the region. We also welcome the cooperation among all signatory parties to the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in preparation for the upcoming presidential and local elections. We also commend MINUSMA on its efforts to prepare for those elections. We urge the Government to ensure smooth and transparent elections in which all segments of the population can participate. We also encourage the Government to implement the remaining provisions of the Agreement in line with the agreed road map.

Thirdly, with regard to the humanitarian situation, we urge all parties to honour their commitments in line with international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and to take the necessary steps to prevent collateral damage in military operations. We welcome the steps taken by the Malian Government to investigate such incidents. We reiterate our support to the International Commission of Inquiry on Mali, which will investigate gross violations and abuses of international law, including sexual violence in time of conflict. We also welcome the Secretary-General's efforts to combat human rights abuses.

We welcome the decision of the Government of Mali to adopt the Safe Schools Declaration. We fully believe that educating youth will promote security and stability in any country. We call upon the Government to redouble its efforts to reopen all of the schools that were closed throughout the country. We also commend the efforts of humanitarian organizations that are cooperating with the central Government to meet the humanitarian needs of the residents of the northern regions. We urge all parties to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers.

In conclusion, Kuwait underscores that the role of the United Nations in Mali and the Sahel is indispensable at this stage. We look forward to the outcome of the MINUSMA strategic review in preparation for the renewal of its mandate next June so as to make its work more efficient in the current difficult environment. I would like to emphasize that we are ready to work with all members of the Security Council during the coming period to ensure the necessary mandate for the Mission and facilitate the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): Let me begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, for his informative

briefing, and Ambassador Skoog for his presentation on the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017), concerning Mali.

(*spoke in French*)

I also wish to welcome Mr. Tiéman Hubert Coulibaly, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali.

(*spoke in English*)

Let me express my strongest condemnation of the recent attacks against MINUSMA in Aguelhok and Gao, which caused the deaths of one Nigerian and two Chadian peacekeepers, and injured 10 others. I would like to express my deepest condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims and to the Governments of Chad and the Niger, as well as to wish a quick and full recovery to those who were injured.

I would like to focus my intervention on three issues, that is, the political process, the security situation and the capacities of the MINUSMA.

On the political process, the implementation of the arduously achieved Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali remains slow in the face of the current challenges and needs. Tangible progress in priority areas, including decentralization, security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, is crucial to advance the peace process. Holding the presidential elections on time will be vital for Mali to avoid serious political tension. However, organizing the elections in a situation where the State remains absent in a large part of the country may even deepen the crisis. In that context, restoring State authority over the entire territory should be of the utmost urgency. Poland supports all the necessary measures taken by the Security Council against individuals and entities engaged in actions or policies that threaten the implementation of the peace process or the security and stability of Mali.

On the security situation, the situation in northern and central Mali continues to be critical and remains a serious threat to regional stability in the Sahel. Terrorist groups continue to carry out attacks against innocent civilians as well as MINUSMA and French and Malian forces. At the same time, counter-terrorism operations continue to raise grave human rights concerns. We believe that the fragile security situation in the region requires a multidimensional approach focused not only on military operations against terrorist networks and organized criminals, but also on creating job opportunities for youth and ensuring accountability for serious crimes that destabilize the peace process.

My third point concerns MINUSMA capacity gaps, which continue to affect the Mission's operations as well as the safety and security of its personnel. MINUSMA peacekeepers continue to be targeted by attacks that are increasingly complex and lethal. Poland welcomes the technical agreement among the United Nations, the European Union and the Group of Five for the Sahel, signed at the Brussels conference in February, with a view to providing the Joint Force with operational and logistical support through MINUSMA. We look forward to the Secretary-General's upcoming update of United Nations support to Joint Force.

In conclusion, Poland commends the tireless efforts of the men and women of MINUSMA in extremely difficult circumstances and fully supports the Special Representative Annadif. We also look forward to the outcome of the ongoing strategic review of the Mission, led by Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj, which will provide guidelines for the future direction of MINUSMA.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Côte d'Ivoire would like to thank Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing on the progress in the peace process in Mali and the support efforts of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). We would also like to thank Ambassador Olof Skoog, Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017), concerning Mali, for his briefing. We would also like to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali, Mr. Tiéman Hubert Coulibaly, to New York to take part in these meetings.

Mr. Annadif's briefing adequately informed us on the encouraging indicators in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, but also alerted us to the persistent threats, specifically the resurfacing of security, humanitarian and socioeconomic challenges in northern and central Mali. Those challenges remain a concern for the Council and remind us of the need to pursue multidimensional support for MINUSMA, the Malian Government and all stakeholders in the crisis, with a view to sustainably restoring peace and stability to Mali.

Côte d'Ivoire, neighbour to Mali, is closely following the developments in the political and security situation in this brotherly country. We reiterate our support to the Government of Mali in the comprehensive and inclusive implementation of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement in the context of a peaceful and sustainable resolution of the current crisis. While the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the demonstrated progress in Mali, it also shares the Secretary-General's concerns about the delays in the implementation of the Agreement and calls on all actors to truly commit to its implementation, particularly with regard to keeping to the timeline for the upcoming local and presidential elections. Time is running out, and the progress towards the implementation of the Agreement would undoubtedly be a symbolic and irreversible gain for a peaceful electoral process and a source of stability.

To that end, Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the adoption, on 16 January, by the Agreement Monitoring Committee at its twenty-third session, with support from MINUSMA, of a timeline for priority actions set forth under the Agreement, particularly in the areas of political and institutional reform, defence and security, economic and social development, elections, justice and reconciliation. Côte d'Ivoire encourages the Agreement Monitoring Committee to seek national consensus on the need for all Malian stakeholders to take ownership of the Agreement and to work together to implement the Algiers road map with the valuable support of Algeria, which is leading international mediation efforts, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

With regard to national reconciliation, the Ivorian delegation would like to express its support for the recent visit undertaken by the Malian Prime Minister Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga to Kidal, Gao, Tessalit and Timbuktu. That visit, the first by a Malian Prime Minister since 2014, enabled an easing of tensions and restored trust by conveying a message of peace and reconciliation to the people and political actors of the region, who have suffered greatly as a result of the crisis.

In view of the persistent security threats in certain regions and the emergence of new hotbeds of intercommunal tensions, MINUSMA should continue to support the redeployment efforts of the national Administration and strengthen the capacities of institutions responsible for security in order to enable the State to ensure the protection of civilians. If they are to be effective, those efforts must be accompanied by support for the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission of former combatants and the National Council for Security Sector Reform. Indeed, that support is essential to countering the illicit traffic in weapons and building a republican national army for peace and development in Mali.

Côte d'Ivoire condemns the attack on a MINUSMA camp in Aguelhok on 5 April, which claimed the lives of two soldiers and wounded a dozen troops in the Chadian contingent. We salute the memory of the deceased soldiers and wish the wounded a speedy recover. That attack prompts the Council to consider the importance of bridging MINUSMA's capacity gaps in terms of protecting its camps and securing roads and supply convoys against attacks by terrorist groups. The improvement of MINUSMA's logistical capabilities through the provision of armoured vehicles and air assets for force projection and the evacuation of victims remains crucial. However, it must be preceded by calibrated training for troops on the asymmetric peacekeeping environment specific to northern and central Mali.

Our delegation welcomes the convergence of views and the unity of action prevailing among Council members with respect to MINUSMA's support for the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). We welcome the signing of the technical agreement among the United Nations, the European Union and the G-5 Sahel States, pursuant to resolution 2391 (2017) of 8 December 2017, with a view to providing, through MINUSMA, specific operational and logistical support to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force.

In that vein, my delegation also welcomes the adoption by the G-5 Sahel States of a compliance framework on respect for human rights in order to ensure the necessary coherence between the military operations of the Joint Force and their obligation to protect human rights. Respect for the compliance framework, which incorporates the principle of accountability, reflects not only donor demands, but also the need for the engagement of the local population, which is a prerequisite for the success of the Joint Force operations.

In order to be effective, the security approach to restoring peace and stability in Mali must be supported by strong initiatives to provide lasting solutions to structural development challenges, such as employment for women and young people and their engagement in

the political process, as well as the fight against poverty and regional disparities. By addressing the root causes of conflict and its effects, we will be able to rebuild the foundations of lasting peace and security in Mali.

In conclusion, I would like once again to make an urgent appeal to all Malian stakeholders and convey to them our country's faith in their ability to overcome their differences in the best interests of the people in order to resolutely implement the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia is grateful for the briefing we received from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, on the situation in the Republic of Mali and developments concerning the activities being carried out by the Mission on the ground. We also welcome the briefing we heard from the Ambassador of Sweden, Mr. Olof Skoog, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017) concerning Mali. We would also like to take this opportunity to welcome His Excellency Mr. Tiéman Hubert Coulibaly, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali.

Before beginning our statement, we would like to express our condolences and regret to the Governments of the Niger and Chad, as well as to the families and relatives of the MINUSMA staff who lost their lives in the deadly attacks that took place in Gao and Kidal in recent days.

Bolivia commends the important efforts made by the Government of Mali as it seeks to strengthen its institutional framework, achieve substantial progress in the legislative and electoral fields, and set benchmarks for the effective implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and its respective provisions in the context of inclusive political dialogue. We are hopeful that the strengthening of those processes will continue to encourage the Security Council, the international community and, of course, the people and Government of Mali.

We also welcome the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali and the Head of MINUSMA for the efforts that he has undertaken to achieve peace and stability in that brotherly country. We welcome the cooperation of the countries that contribute troops and police contingents to serve in MINUSMA. We would like to express our gratitude to the MINUSMA peacekeeping staff who risk their lives, and we pay tribute to those who have sacrificed their lives in fulfilling their duties.

We acknowledge that the challenges faced by MINUSMA have evolved since the Mission was deployed in 2013. The Mission is not only faced with the violence unleashed by armed groups but must also counter the growing threat posed by terrorist groups and transnational crime. The terrorist threat continues to put at risk the well-being and the very lives of the civilian population and has put the brakes on the economic growth and social development of the country, which has contributed to the proliferation of transnational organized crime and its repercussions in the subregion, in addition to having significantly depleted the capacities of the Malian security forces, which have been the subject of horrific attacks.

Asymmetric attacks using improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and small arms and light weapons continue to worsen conditions on the ground. We are deeply concerned to see that the insecurity in the north and centre of Mali has continued to grow. Attacks on State authority and Government institutions make it abundantly clear that there is a need to craft strategies that would provide for more effective and efficient security mechanisms in the more vulnerable sectors and regions.

MINUSMA's priority should be to protect civilians who live under the threat of physical violence, bearing in mind that the main responsibility in that area lies with the Malian authorities. We deem it vital to point out that the Malian forces have suffered the most lethal attacks and saw an increase in the number of casualties and injuries. According to the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/273), 45 soldiers were killed and 80 injured, compared with the 23 killed and eight injured in the previous reporting period. This underscores the vital need for MINUSMA, in line with resolution 2364 (2017), to adopt a more active and proactive stance in order to be able to fulfil its mandate.

On that understanding, we encourage MINUSMA to continue to promote the implementation of the memorandum of understanding with the Malian Government, which will allow it to support the Malian armed forces in the operational field as well as in terms of intelligence-gathering, medical evacuation,

the elimination and handling of explosive ordnance, and demining.

We therefore call on the Mission to redouble its efforts in the area of coordination and exchange of information with the Malian Government, so that concrete, factual data can be obtained that can then be captured in the relevant reports to be received by the Security Council. The goal here is to maintain support and enhance confidence-building measures between the host State and MINUSMA.

In the light of the aforementioned, it is clear that the security situation in Mali and in the broader Sahel region is riven with major challenges. Bolivia highlights the efforts made by regional and subregional organizations, led by the African Union, in cooperation and coordination with the Group of Five for the Sahel joint force. We believe that such cooperation is vital in order to combat transnational organized crime and to ensure better and safer living conditions for the local civilian population.

To conclude, it is vital to underscore that in this particular instance the deep-rooted causes of conflict that led to the volatile security situation in the region are intrinsically related to the consequences of the policies of interventionism and regime change. Indeed, in the wake of the 2011 conflict in Libya, the collateral destabilizing effects led to chaos, terrorism and the militarization of the Sahel, with regrettable consequences that persist to this day.

We call on and encourage the international community to continue to lend its assistance, through technical support and economic and humanitarian cooperation, to all initiatives aimed at benefiting the Malian people, with a view to achieving definitive peace and stability in the region.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands) (*spoke in French*): I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Annadif, as well as the Chair of the sanctions Committee, Mr. Olof Skoog, for their respective briefings. We are pleased to note the presence among us of His Excellency Minister Coulibaly. As the Minister is aware, there is a deep friendship between the peoples of our two countries, a friendship forged by 35 years of development cooperation and our participation in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) since 2014. I pay tribute to the soldiers of this peacekeeping operation who laid down their lives, including in particular Dutch soldiers, in previous years.

Two weeks ago, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, during its presidency of the Security Council, convened an open debate on collective action to improve United Nations peacekeeping operations (see S/PV.8218). Today's meeting affords the Council an opportunity to translate the ambitions voiced during that debate into concrete measures. Such measures are imperative in the light of the plethora of problems facing Mali, including terrorism, drug and weapons smuggling, human trafficking and the threat of escalation and spillover to the entire Sahel region and beyond, even to Europe.

In that context, I wish to focus on three elements: first, the primacy of politics; secondly, performance; and thirdly, the prevention of impunity.

My first point concerns the primacy of politics. As was acknowledged by all those who participated in the open debate, United Nations peacekeeping operations must above all support the political process. Only with a negotiated political settlement can lasting peace and security come within reach. The support provided by MINUSMA for the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali has proved essential and remains so today.

The international community has invested heavily in Mali. In return, we expect of all Malian parties that they shoulder their responsibility to implement the Peace Agreement. We join other colleagues today in urging all signatories to renew their commitment to the peace process. In the absence of an inclusive process, peace will elude us. During the aforementioned debate, Ms. Fatimata Touré noted that only 3 per cent of those formally involved in the peace process are women. We must see to it that all Malians are adequately represented, as my Swedish colleague mentioned.

The most urgent steps that need to be taken to implement the peace agreement include, first, decentralization; secondly, security-sector reform; and thirdly, the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants in the Malian armed forces. We expect all Malian parties to deliver on this. These measures are critical to restore the legitimacy of the State in the north and to regain people's trust. Progress has been far too slow for too long. We must not shy away from imposing sanctions on spoilers of the peace process, including trafficking networks.

My second point relates to performance. Action for Peacekeeping, an initiative launched by the Secretary-General during the open debate I mentioned, emphasizes the fact that all of us bear the responsibility to act. We must also dare to engage in an honest process of reflection on MINUSMA's mandate and on the capacities necessary for it to be implemented. The shifting conditions in Mali require MINUSMA to be flexible and innovative. Last Thursday's and Friday's attacks must serve as a reminder for Member States of their responsibility to provide MINUSMA with the appropriate equipment in terms of both troops and capacities. Also crucial is the need to foster a genuinely integrated approach among the military, civil and police pillars, specifically when it comes to information-sharing and intelligence-led planning. With a view to the renewal of MINUSMA's mandate, in June, it would be advisable that the Security Council receive the strategic plan requested in its resolution 2364 (2017).

The third point I wish to raise is the prevention of impunity. Lack of accountability for the perpetrators of human rights violations in Mali promotes instability and jihadism. The restoration of State institutions, including the security forces, is a basic condition for achieving stability, but that stability can be sustainable only within the framework of the rule of law, which means that impunity is impermissible. The recent discovery of a mass grave in central Mali unfortunately shows the extent of the problems that the country is facing. We call on the Malian Government to ensure that the guilty parties are held accountable for their actions.

In conclusion, the only way to achieve the Malian people's trust is by demonstrating an unwavering commitment to the rule of law. In that context, the Netherlands welcomes the fact that the Malian authorities recently handed over Mr. Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud to the International Criminal Court in The Hague. Given the friendship between the peoples of our two countries, we would like to see justice and sustainable development for the people of Mali as soon as possible.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would first like to welcome Mr. Tiéman Hubert Coulibaly, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali, and to thank him for finding the time to join our meeting. I also thank Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), for his informative briefing on the situation in Mali, and our Swedish colleague, Mr. Olof Skoog, for his thorough report (S/2017/1126). On the whole, we share their concerns about the troubling developments in Mali and believe that the dangerous potential for conflict there remains. Unfortunately, the geographic extent of terrorist and extremist operations has been expanding, particularly recently. What can be done to counter it?

First and foremost, all Malian stakeholders should acknowledge the fact that the speedy and comprehensive implementation of the 2015 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali is in both their individual and national interests. In that regard, we welcome the promulgation of the updated road map for its implementation agreed to on 22 March between the Platform coalition of armed groups and the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad. We hope it will give new impetus to completing the process of distributing authority between the country's centre and its regions and to the successful and much-needed security-sector reform. It will be particularly important to complete as soon as possible the process of re-establishing the civilian authorities and to use Government armed forces and local volunteers to establish joint patrols and military bases in the North, without which it will be impossible to combat terrorist activity. At the same time, of course, we must not lose sight of the country's central areas, where extremists have once again reared their heads.

The problem of ensuring security is also a major issue with regard to the presidential, parliamentary and municipal elections to be held this year. It is in the interests of all those in the military and political forces working within the legal framework to ensure that the elections will run smoothly and be seen to be legitimate.

We believe the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali is very important. We firmly condemn last week's attacks on its peacekeepers, which unfortunately claimed several lives. Such tragic events should mobilize us to finally bring the Mission up to full operational readiness. We realize that MINUSMA's successful implementation of its mandate depends in part on its Blue Helmets being provided with essential equipment. We urge the troop-contributing countries not to delay honouring the commitments that they have made not

only regarding their deployment of contingents, but also in providing all the necessary equipment.

It will be difficult to achieve domestic political stability without normalizing the situation in the region as a whole. In that connection, we support the concrete steps taken by the Group of Five for the Sahel in establishing its Joint Force to combat terrorist groups and conducting their first successful operation on the ground.

As I said, we have perused Mr. Skoog's report on the work of the 2374 Committee with interest. I would like to point out that in September of last year, Russia responded to Bamako's appeal by supporting the adoption of resolution 2374 (2017), establishing that subsidiary body of the Council. We believe that the direct use of sanctions should be a measure of last resort and that rushing to impose restrictions will hinder the entire settlement process.

I would like to touch on one other issue. Much has been said about the reasons for the ongoing deplorable situation in the region, but one is truly worthy of special mention — the current state of affairs in Libya, the result of the overthrow of the Government in 2011. Because of it, a virtually unchecked flood of terrorism and weapons has been pouring out from there into West Africa. In that regard, we stand in solidarity with the opinions repeatedly expressed at the international conference on the Sahel, which concluded its work in Nouakchott on 29 March, that the Libyan crisis was not just the main trigger destabilizing the situation in the region but has continued to be a persistent negative factor in it. It is crucial that Member States remember that lesson for the future.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

At the outset, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Tiéman Hubert Coulibaly, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali. We also thank Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and Ambassador Olof Skoog, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017) concerning Mali, for their briefings.

Despite some progress, Peru notes with concern the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in Mali, particularly in the central and northern regions of the country. Clashes continue among armed groups, as do the activities of terrorist groups in areas with a weak State presence. We stress the importance of the implementation of the 2015 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. In accordance with the timeline and the road map adopted in March, we encourage the promotion of defence, security, decentralization and socioeconomic development with a view to building lasting peace in the country. We commend the work of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, the independent observer and the 2374 Sanctions Committee in support of the implementation of the Agreement. We would also like to highlight the role of MINUSMA.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

We also underscore the need to move forward with the following three goals.

The first concerns the holding of free and fair elections this year. We believe that it is important to ensure that the process is conducted transparently and inclusively, includes broad citizen participation, and serves to bring more women and young people into political life. Regional and international support are also important.

The second goal concerns the implementation of a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme for former combatants, as well as reform of the security sector. In that regard, we commend the efforts of the Malian Government and encourage it to continue to move ahead and pick up the pace.

Nevertheless, we must bear in mind that the crisis in Mali is connected with the entire Sahel region. We consider it necessary to pay special attention to the links between terrorism and cross-border organized crime and to strengthen the regional response to these scourges, inter alia, by increasing operational and logistical support to the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). In that regard, we welcome the signing of the technical agreement between MINUSMA, the European Union and the members of the G-5 Sahel, in accordance with resolution 2391 (2017), and encourage donors to continue to contribute to that effort.

Thirdly, with regard to the strengthening of MINUSMA's operational capabilities, we are concerned that 100 per cent of the authorized force has not yet been deployed and that it continues to lack equipment. We

look forward to the results of the MINUSMA strategic review, which will help redefine the Mission's action plan and strategies in the light of the challenges on the ground in the forthcoming renewal of its mandate.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mali.

Mr. Coulibaly (Mali) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by mentioning the terrible news that came to us this morning about the plane crash in Algeria, in which 257 people died. On behalf of Mali and on behalf of everyone in the Chamber today, I would like to express our feelings of compassion and condolences to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, a country that is dear to us and which plays an absolutely central role in the peace process in Mali.

I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your presidency of the Security Council for this month of April and express to the delegation of the Netherlands our appreciation for the remarkable manner in which it conducted the work of the Council over the past month. I would also like to convey the message of deep gratitude of the President of the Republic of Mali to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr António Guterres, for his personal commitment to the well-being of the people of Mali, the Sahel region and the world as a whole.

Recent visits by United Nations officials and envoys illustrate the quality of the cooperation that has existed between the United Nations and the Government of Mali since the beginning of this crisis, the settlement and peace processes of which are under way. We take note of the report of the Secretary-General on the period under review (S/2018/273) and thank Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali and Head of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), for his briefing, which focused on the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, the political perspectives and the actions carried out by MINUSMA.

A little less than three months ago, on 23 January, during an exercise similar to this morning's meeting (see S/PV.8163), I informed the Security Council of the four priority objectives that the President of the Republic had assigned to the new Government team, the first of which was the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, which emerged from the Algiers process. Today Mali welcomes the recognition in the Secretary-General's report of the new impetus given to the peace process since the establishment by the President, on 30 December 2017, of the Government headed by Prime Minister Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga.

The Head of Government's tour from 22 to 26 March in the northern and central regions of Mali, specifically in Tessalit, Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal, Koro, Bankass, Bandiagara and Djenné, regions affected by destabilization and infested by terrorists, is part of this dynamic. The tour lived up to all its promises. It embodied the hope of true peace and reconciliation in our country. The Prime Minister's visit not only addressed the legitimate concerns of our people with respect to the expected peace dividends, but also established the Government's commitment to continuing its efforts for the full and complete implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation.

In Mali, the Government understands and shares the impatience with the delays in the implementation of certain provisions of the Agreement, but I would like to reassure the Security Council and the international community as a whole, which is assisting Mali, of the Government's firm determination, under the authority of the President, to bring the peace process in Mali to a successful conclusion. But we can already look back with satisfaction at a number of advances that have been made in the implementation of the Agreement.

The first appreciable achievements, which are not often mentioned, are reflected in the total cessation of all belligerence not only among the signatory parties but also between the Malian army and the signatory movements. Council members will recall that at a one time the clashes among these groups seriously undermined the implementation of the Agreement.

I would like to point out the progressive redeployment of the Administration in the northern and central regions through the recent appointment of prefects and sub-prefects and the ongoing strengthening of the interim authorities to respond to an appeal launched by the international community, for which the Malian State has allocated very significant budgetary resources despite the well-known economic situation of Mali and our limited means. I addition — and this has been mentioned several times this morning — I would point to the adoption, on 22 March, of the road map for

the implementation of the timeline that we presented to the Council in January. This is important because all parties have reviewed the implementation plan for this timeline and have signed this new document, which will soon be presented to those Council members who have not already seen it.

The timeline not only presents a realistic approach but it also expresses a commitment by the various parties. Our position here in January was that the Security Council should receive this timeline, consider it as a working document and activate all possible tools, including the Sanctions Committee, so that all actors would be moved to respect commitments.

This new road map, which is not in fact an additional document, but is a version of the actions to be implemented wisely and perhaps to be sorted out according to what is absolutely urgent, what can wait a little bit and perhaps what divides us that needs internal Malian discussion in order to move forward, is, in my opinion, a document that will not only allow us to navigate the presidential elections in July, which will be partly secured by the signatory movements — this commitment has been made — but also to lead us to the legislative elections at the end of the year. This year's electoral process, once completed, will move us towards the local and regional elections, which are very important for the implementation of the Agreement and in which we will see the emergence of new actors from the signatory movements who will also be ready to stand for election, take control of the regions and restore political balance to the country.

I would also highlight the holding of the high-level workshop on security reform. The Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Mr. Zuev, was in Bamako and attended that exercise, which heralded good news with regard to the reform process, including the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process. There were constructive discussions on the issue of DDR and the registration of ex-combatants in many regions. We are expecting that the cantonment sites will soon receive the first ex-combatants to speed up all those steps.

Clearly, all those gains are fragile. I know that. We know that. They are all the more fragile because the implementation of the Agreement is taking place in a complex and difficult environment, characterized by the activities of groups linked to terrorism, violent extremism or trafficking, mixed up with the interests set by a political agenda of terrorist groups who want to replace States building democracy, or national States, by States where the laws of evil and crime prevail. That manifests itself at the transnational level, which, as many have said, largely goes beyond Mali's borders. That project of violence, obscurantism and enslavement is a cross-border issue. Our approach in Mali is subject to that dynamic, which looms over the entire Sahel region.

Those groups seek to establish a sanctuary for criminal organizations in our region. We have to fight every day in order for our stabilization and peace processes for the Sahel region to flourish in a climate that is endlessly disrupted by those groups. It is therefore important to consider consistent international action in support of the initiatives of our countries, such as the operationalization of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), so that we can move forwards towards peace and ownership of our process.

An objective set by the President of the Republic for the Government is to contain the increasing insecurity in the centre of the country. In that regard, we welcome the encouraging results of the implementation of the integrated security strategy for the centre with a view to ensuring calm and the effective restoration of State authority to that part of the country. The Government is increasingly showing its presence and providing basic social services for our population. We should note that, during his visit, the Prime Minister highlighted those central regions so that the population feels the State presence and its commitment to restoring order there.

As I said early, the regional dimension of the insecurity is part of the mandate entrusted to the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel. The implementation level of the Force should be commended. Mali continues to fully support the Niger presidency, which assumed the leadership of that body a few months ago. In the context of international solidarity, we would like to support the appeal of the Secretary-General for the release of the funds pledged at the Brussels meeting of 23 February. That is extremely important because that tool complements the actions led by United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

The third priority of our Government is the successful organization of the elections. I would like to clearly and categorically affirm that our Government is determined to hold transparent, inclusive and

credible elections throughout the country, in line with the constitutional timeline. As I said, the visit of the Prime Minister to the northern region, provided an opportunity for the signatory movements to affirm their support for that process. It is essential that those movements help to ensure the security of the electoral process. We will start with the election of the President of the Republic, which is the most important election, followed by legislative elections for the new Parliament. The material and logistical provisions have been made for the vote to be free, fair and peaceful. The electoral register will be audited independently so that key tool for the elections enjoys consensus.

In its electoral practices, Mali has not experienced post-electoral conflict violence because we have always respected the principles of inclusivity and consensus in advance. In the same way, today there is a framework of consultation among the ministries, regional administrations and all elements of our society, including civil society. The concerns expressed about the inclusion of women and young people in that process have been taken into account. Since November, Mali has been registering those who have reached the age of legal majority in order for the registration to be complete. That exercise was carried out and, at the time of the audit, we can be sure that our electoral register is fully agreed.

I would like to say that there is no place for impunity in Mali. All acts found to contravene the law or respect for human rights will be properly dealt with in the courts. Judicial arrangements are in place and the prosecutor is engaged. Any person found guilty of human rights violations will be appropriately dealt with under the law. We know that is a condition for the sincere commitment of all to the peace process and for trust to be restored in our country. However, I would like to express our reservations with regard to reported events, in particular the indifference of our army when there was a series of fires in some villages. In the most polite way, I would like to refute that. Our army could not be indifferent to a part of the Malian population being subjected to events that threaten the lives of their fellow citizens. For all the rest, we will await the findings of the judicial authorities so that any procedures provided for under the law can be implemented, where necessary.

Here in this Chamber, I would like to affirm our support for the actions of Ambassador Skoog, Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017) concerning Mali, whom we hosted. Before the Council, we would like to affirm our full and complete cooperation with all missions — those of the independent observer and of the International Commission of Inquiry on Mali — and with everything that is necessary for the peace process and cooperation between Mali and the United Nations to be not only smooth but also marked by the seal of trust.

The humanitarian situation is worrisome. Clearly, we expect the support of the international community while we ourselves, in line with our resources, which are of course limited, do our utmost to support our fellow citizens who may find themselves in a fragile humanitarian situation.

With regard to schools, some have already reopened. The Prime Minister has taken steps to ensure that all Koranic schools in the centre are integrated into the national educational system in order to take charge not only of the material but also of the curriculum taught in those schools. Those challenges are significant. We support the appeal of the Secretary-General to the countries that have pledged to fulfil their commitments in order to bridge the gap between the available funds, at approximately $8 million, and the urgent humanitarian needs, estimated at a total of $263 million.

In conclusion, I would also like to express our unequivocal support for MINUSMA's work. We commend the outstanding leadership of the Head of MINUSMA, Mr. Annadif, who works tirelessly every day to personally ensure the sound and smooth functioning of MINUSMA. We also commend his team, which works so hard in Bamako on a daily basis. That is essential, particularly at a time when the strategic review is under way and when, I have no doubt, in June important decisions will be taken for the future of MINUSMA.

I align line myself with the appeals made to increase the resources available to MINUSMA and for measures to be taken to enhance the protection of the troops, as well as for greater interaction between MINUSMA, the G-5 Sahel Joint Force and all those involved in military efforts.

The situation is worrisome, as many here in the Chamber have said. Nonetheless, I remain convinced that hope springs eternal, and we know that we can achieve the noble mission set before us. Malians are committed to the cause, as is the international community. I think that each step we take is a sure step, albeit a baby step. All that we have achieved thus far in restoring

trust between the different players is invaluable and will allow us to build upon the achievements that we have made.

I would like once again to reassure the members of the Council of my Government's commitment and determination to leave no stone unturned in order to ensure that this process continues to make the headway that we are all awaiting and that it follows an agenda to continue moving forward rather than sliding backwards.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.